

CONCLUSIONS

The percentage of young people between the ages of 13 – 15 years who currently use any tobacco product is 16.9%, with 9.9% currently using other tobacco products and 8.7% currently smoking cigarettes. The percentage of students who ever smoked cigarettes, even one or two puffs, is 29.5%. It has been estimated that one year after this survey 14.2% of never smokers are likely to start smoking. This prevalence rate is considered low but if the present trend is not arrested many of those youths who currently smoke would have to endure a lifetime of addiction and may die prematurely from tobacco-related diseases.

Disheartening is the realisation that 40.3% children initiate cigarette smoking before the age of 10 years. This should be of great concern since the younger children start to smoke, the more likely they would become addicted. Addiction leads to heavy smoking and premature death from tobacco-related illnesses.

Generally, young people usually smoke at home. More boys than girls use tobacco but it has been observed that girls tend to smoke more at home than boys, while boys, especially older ones, tend to smoke in public places. More boys than girls smoke in a friend's house.

A high percentage of current smokers aged 13 – 15 years who have bought cigarettes in a store were not refused purchase because of their age and most of them obtained their own cigarettes from the store or from an older person.

Nearly 79% of current smokers desired to stop smoking. About 81% tried unsuccessfully to stop over the past year, although about 71% said they have received help.

Students were exposed to both anti- and pro-smoking media messages. A large percentage saw anti-smoking messages on the media and at sporting and other events. On the other hand, a large percentage saw advertisement for cigarettes on billboards, in newspapers and magazines and brand names at sport events or on television. Some even had an object with a cigarette brand logo on it.

Less than 50% students were taught in class during the past year about the dangers of smoking, the reasons why people their age smoke and the effects of tobacco.

Exposure of young people to tobacco smoke is high. About one-third students live in homes where others smoke and nearly twice that amount are around others who smoke in places outside their home. Almost 70% students felt that other people cigarette smoke is harmful to them and about 75% of them would like to see smoking banned from public places. The time is ripe for appropriate legislature to be introduced to create a tobacco-free environment in which children would be able to enjoy a healthy lifestyle.